

## Jewish Studies

Steven Fine, *The Menorah: From the Bible to Modern Israel*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2016; xii + 279 pp., \$ 29.95.

The cover blurb of Fine's book describes it as a 'meticulously researched yet deeply personal history'. Indeed, this is a well-written academic survey of the history and varying symbolic meanings of the menorah – the seven-branched Jewish lampstand – interspersed with Fine's personal 'history' with this object. The latter is not restricted to Fine's research – which in itself contains fascinating experiences, such as standing on a scaffolding underneath the Titus arch in Rome, and reading correspondence between Israel's president and the Vatican over the alleged presence, even today, of the Temple menorah in the Holy City (which Fine denies). He also does not eschew from venting his personal irritation over naive presuppositions from ultra-orthodox side, or, in his eyes dangerous, rightist political viewpoints, such as Jabotinsky's Zionist revisionist movement, or, more recently, the Temple Institute. In seven chapters, the history of the menorah is chronologically laid out, starting with the detailed instructions of God to Moses in the book Exodus for fabricating a lampstand for the desert-sanctuary; continuing with the menorahs in the two Temples; through medieval Jewish, Christian and Islamic uses of the menorah; and ending with the menorah in the state emblem of Israel, and beyond, in the surfacing of giant menorahs constructed by various Jewish and Christian groups in cities worldwide. Central in all this is the menorah as it is depicted on the triumphal arch of Titus, to be admired to this day on the forum Romanum. The shape of this particular menorah – with seven rounded arms and a square, decorated, pedestal, has entered history as 'the' model for imagining the temple menorah and fashioning new copies. Fine explains that this model is, however, not uncontested. The famous thirteenth-century Jewish sage Maimonides, for example, was convinced that the arch menorah was not a faithful copy of the original, which the Romans took from the second temple. After a thorough investigation of the biblical sources, Maimonides himself drew a sketch of the menorah 'as it really was', with straight, not bent arms. Another major objection against the 'true' nature of the arch menorah is its base. From both (a certain) Jewish and (protestant) Christian perspective, it was/is unconceivable that the menorah base featured animals, even a dragon. This objection reflects modern religious concerns rather than ancient ones, as images of animals have been discovered on synagogue floors from the Byzantine and even second-temple periods. On the other hand, archeology has demonstrated that ancient lampstands rarely had a square base but rather rested on three 'feet'. The objection against the shape of the arch menorah received a political dimension as the menorah became embedded, first in the emblem of the

Jewish Legion, and, eventually, in the Israeli national emblem. The monumental menorah in front of the Knesset – a gift from the British – with its engraved human figures marks the widening rift between religious and secular conceptions of the menorah as a Jewish symbol. Of the seven chapters, five deal with developments of this symbol in modernity, but always linking it back to the biblical and ancient history of Temple artifact. This is what I find Fine's major contribution to scholarship. What I miss in the book is an excursus into the (nine-armed) chanukiah, its literary sources, and its difference from and relation to the menorah. At times the two lampstands are even conflated, as when discussing the public Chabad 'menorah' lightings. Original and efficient is the use of 'bibliographical essays' to each chapter at the end of the book, *in lieu* of footnotes and a bibliography. The book concludes with two Facebook posts by Fine and his then 13-year old son, covering their findings of the menorah in Rome. These posts are signed 'The Menorah men'. And indeed, Fine will enter academic history as (at least also) the Menorah man.

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## History of Christianity

Erik Sengers, *Roomsche socioloog – sociale bisschop: Joannes Aengenent als ideoloog en bestuurder van de katholieke sociale beweging 1873-1935*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2016; 291 pp., € 29.

Al uit de verouderde spelling van het woordje 'roomsch' in de boektitel wordt duidelijk met wat voor socioloog we hier te maken krijgen. Het vak sociologie zoals dat vanaf 1913 (!) op het grootseminarie Warmond werd gedoceerd door J. Aengenent, de hoofdpersoon van dit boek, was iets heel anders dan de empirische en op kwantitatieve methodes gebaseerde wetenschap van nu. J.A.A. van Doorn, de vader van de sociologie in Nederland, situeert het ontstaan ervan in de sociale kwestie aan het einde van de negentiende eeuw. Liberalen en marxisten gingen de ogen open voor de theoretische en praktische consequenties die daaruit getrokken moesten worden. Aengenent vertegenwoordigt met zijn christelijke sociale wetenschap een standpunt tussen die extremen in. Hij reflecteert vanuit een katholieke visie (*Rerum Novarum* [1891]) over de wenselijke inrichting van de samenleving, om er vervolgens systematisch op te studeren, erover te publiceren en erin te doceren om aankomende parochiepriesters er de praktijk mee in te sturen. Zijn stof omvat een neo-scholastieke filosofie, het daarop gebaseerd normatief stelsel en tenslotte een sociale ethiek, allemaal dingen die nu niet meer tot het sociologische vakgebied worden gerekend. De auteur van dit boek, zelf van huis uit socioloog, doet deze evolutie van 'de sociologie als wetenschap' helder uit de doeken. Daarmee bewijst hij